The ‘Coming of Age’ of Baptist Theology in Generation Twenty-Something

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The Poverty of Baptist Theology

James McClendon begins his three-volume project in Systematic Theology with a strikingly terse statement: “Theology means struggle.”¹ The struggle to think out and live out the truth begins first, he explains, with the humble fact that the church has a story to tell that is not the world’s story. Since the line of demarcation between church and world runs through each Christian heart, those who speak of God struggle, not only to tell the story, but to get the story straight. The theological struggle is further complicated by the historical fact of a divided Christianity. To be sure, the task of theology—especially systematic theology—includes speaking descriptively and prescriptively for all Christians as each generation offers an account of “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3),² but McClendon observes that theology—even systematic theology—cannot without distortion be abstracted from the convictions and practices of the church so that it becomes merely an experiment of organized subjectivity.³

Following the insight of Schleiermacher, McClendon argues that theology must be referential to some particular Christian community.⁴ Anglican bishop and theologian, Rowan Williams, similarly observes:

[T]he theologian is always beginning in the middle of things. There is a practice of common life and language already there, a practice that defines a specific shared way of interpreting human life as lived in relation to God. . . . The theologian emerges as a distinct and

³McClendon, Ethics, 18.
⁴Friedrich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, 2d ed., trans. and ed. M.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (1928; reprint, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) § 19. Schleiermacher argued that since there is no systematic connection between Catholic and Protestant doctrine, theology in the West must be either Catholic or Protestant. Although later theologians would attempt to offer general accounts of the Christian faith, Schleiermacher made no apology for setting forth one that was clearly Protestant.
identifiable figure when these meanings have become entangled with one another, when there is a felt tension between images or practices, when a shape has to be drawn out so that the community’s practice can be effectively communicated.\(^5\)

Given this practical approach, McClendon suggests that the classic texts of Christian theology are not general statements of religious ideas, but rather are “the discovery, understanding, and transformation of the convictions” of “a community of reference.”\(^6\) Thus Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae* reflects the sacramental and social standpoint of medieval Catholicism; Gregory of Palamas’s *Triads* coheres with the contemplative practices of Hesychast monasticism; John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* represents the rigorous discipline of Reformed Christianity; Friedrich Schleiermacher’s *The Christian Faith* offers a modern account of religious affections characteristic of Moravian Pietism; and Paul Tillich’s *Systematic Theology* displays an existential awareness of guilt and grace distinctive of Lutheran Protestantism.

As McClendon examines the theological literature, he finds significant contributions from Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant writers, but he wonders why baptists (the lower case “b” consistently used to denote the Radical Reformation, Free/Believers Church tradition) have produced so little theology. The default answer is that they have largely been marginalized from the social and religious mainstream. Yet this explanation fails to account for why baptists, even when they have flourished economically and socially, have produced no theological tradition and literature proportionate to their Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran, or Methodist counterparts. The more basic reason is, McClendon contends, that baptists have not seen their own convictions and practices as a resource for theology.\(^7\)

That baptists in America and Great Britain have not readily turned to their own common life for reflection is understandable given their preoccupation with two issues: one, the Calvinist-Arminian polarity which determined the theological agenda through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the other, the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy which diverted their attention for much of the twentieth century. Consequently, Reformed and Enlightenment issues have largely shaped the theology of baptists rather than the Radical heritage.\(^8\) McClendon’s project seeks to overcome the poverty of baptist theology in two ways: (1) it recovers a distinctive baptist vision as a standpoint for theological reflection, and (2) it retrieves diverse baptist voices as partners for theological conversation. He notes that biblicism, mission, liberty, discipleship, and community are persistent marks of the shared life in Christ baptists have lived out. More particularly, he contends that the hermeneutical perspective of the first mark (i.e., biblicism) is a

\(^{7}\)Ibid., 26.
\(^{8}\)Ibid., 25.
touchstone for the others. This way of reading Scripture is “the baptist vision.” It is essentially a way of seeing in which “the church now is the primitive church; we are Jesus’ followers; the commands are addressed directly to us.” From this perspective, “past and present and future [are] linked by a ‘this is that’ and ‘then is now’ vision, a trope of mystical identity binding the story now to the story then, and the story then and now to God’s future yet to come.” Theology from this standpoint is not reduced to a kind of religious “identity politics” but rather enables the theologian to discern and describe the convictions and practices of the communities of the vision—the baptists.

One reviewer dismisses this practical theory as merely a “sophisticated version of ‘testifying.’” Perhaps the puzzlement of this most-modern critic is rooted in the Constantinian-Reformed-Puritan-Enlightenment assumption that “a truly systematic theology attempts to speak in universalistic terms” because the language and life of religion are shared by “both the church and the culture.” The heirs of the Radical Reformation, however, rarely acquired a majority consciousness that presumed to speak for everyone, due in no small measure to the fact that their heritage is rooted in soil watered by the blood of those who dared to differ. The life and thought of the spiritual descendants of Michael Sattler, John Smyth, Roger Williams, and John Bunyan has been socially disenfranchised and religiously marginalized from the theological mainstream. Indeed, from the perspective of establishment Christianity, the baptist vision (as McClendon describes it) seems to get everything backwards: Christian life before Christian faith, ethics before doctrine, convictions before reasons. But this backward character is indicative of “the view from below” from where baptists learned to see things.

For much of the twentieth century, the course and discourse of baptist theology in North America was determined by two classic texts: A. H. Strong’s Systematic Theology among Northern (American) Baptists and E. Y. Mullins’s The Christian Religion for Southern Baptists. With Strong and Mullins,
baptist theology joined the mainstream as they were interested primarily in tracking the issues and debates of establishment Protestantism and its conversations with modern science and philosophy. Walter Rauschenbusch, however, led the way for an authentically baptist theology in the twentieth century, not only because he attained a cosmopolitan stature, but because he attended to the convictions and practices of the Radical (rather than the Magisterial) Reformers. His theology was guided by the baptist vision. As McClendon observes: "Rauschenbush disclosed not only the biblical root but the historical setting of each doctrine [which] gave him a lever to criticize unhealthy accretions to Christian faith."16

Following the pattern of Rauschenbusch, McClendon has retrieved as conversation partners a rich diversity of baptist voices inside and outside the theological mainstream. Of particular importance are the contributions of the Radical Reformers, but of surprising significance are the writings of women, African Americans, and Christians from the postcolonial two-thirds world which have been largely ignored.17 The historical retrieval of these roots affords an opportunity to revision the vision so as to bring to speech distinctive baptist voices silenced or suppressed by the Euro-American and mainline Protestant hegemony.18 But the present task of revisioning would not be possible without the previous generation who participated in the coming of age of baptist theology.

The ‘Coming of Age’ of Baptist Theology

Two decades before McClendon lamented the poverty of baptist theology, Brooks Hays and John E. Steely observed:

It may [be] asked why Baptists have not made a contribution to the world of theological thought in proportion to our numerical strength and our vigor in evangelism, education, and missions. We must concede that this is a true judgment and a proper question. Although we shall mention some who have made such contribution, we cannot list a great number of theologians whose influence goes beyond the boundaries of our own denomination.19

Hays and Steely did not imagine the need for writing an entire theology from a baptist perspective, but they encouraged Baptists to make a contribution to

18Drawing from the biblical witness and the earliest insights of the baptist heritage was precisely the aim of the Re-Envisioning Baptist Identity document.
Christian theology by offering reflection on their way of life. Baptist theology, they argued, is an ecumenical endeavor that should be carried out in conversation with "the world-wide family of Christian believers." In a study entitled *Systematic Theology Today*, Thor Hall concluded that

the Baptists and the Methodists, are under-represented in the community of systematic theologians, while several other traditions, notably the Presbyterian, the Episcopal, and the United Church of Christ, are markedly over-represented. Most dramatic is the short-fall among Baptist[s]... No one will begrudge these denominational "families" their theological strength, of course. It is nevertheless to be regretted that the Baptist and Methodist traditions do not show the same level of concern for making contributions to the discipline of systematic theology at the present.

Hall's study seems to confirm the old joke that "a Methodist is just a Baptist who learned to read." Hays, Steely, Hall, and McClendon are correct to call attention to the poverty of baptist theology as a second-order appraisal of the language used in Christian living and worship. Yet Baptists have had their share of first-order theologians, who clearly declare the convictions and practices of the community. What none of these observers seem to have recognized at the time they wrote was that a new wave of baptist theology had already begun to sweep across North America from shore to shore.

Several years ago, McClendon invited me to work with him on a project of collecting, editing, and annotating primary source readings in baptist theology. Our research generally confirmed the assessment of the comparative poverty of the baptist theological heritage, but we were surprised at how much material was available: some texts which had been largely overlooked, and others that were long forgotten. We soon found ourselves unhappily having to exclude many fine pieces from our anthology. As a gesture to those who were omitted, we developed a wider list of baptist theologians. Still incomplete, it indicates the wealth of theological literature baptists have produced. Even the casual observer notices the increasing number of entries in the twentieth century, but a careful reader detects that no decade in the century contributed more to the theological tradition of baptists than those who were born in what might be called "generation twenty-something" (1919/20-29).

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20 Ibid., 171.
22 Dwight A. Moody suggests that this wave was the third major wave of Baptist theology: the first being that of Strong, Boyce, and Clarke, the second Rauschenbusch, Mullins, Macintosh, and Conner, in "Contemporary Theologians Within the Believers’ Church" in *The People of God: Essays on the Believers’ Church*, ed. Paul Basden and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1991) 334.
23 Freeman, McClendon, and da Silva, *Baptist Roots: A Reader in the Theology of a Christian People*.
24 Ibid., 405-09.
25 It may be argued that we have simply overlooked important entries before and after
Consider the impressive list: E. J. Carnell (1919-67), Langdon Gilkey (1919- ), Morris Ashcraft (1922- ), C. Norman Kraus (1924- ), James Wm. McClendon, Jr. (1924- ), Gordon Kaufman (1925- ), James Leo Garrett (1925- ), Gordon R. Lewis (1926- ), Takashi Yamada (1926- ), John Howard Yoder (1927-97), James Deotis Roberts (1927- ), Osadolor Imasogie (1928- ), Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-68), and Harvey Cox (1929- ). It would be no exaggeration to say that these fourteen writing theologians have made lasting contributions, not only to the theological enrichment of their own denominations and wider baptist relations, but to the global Christian family and the whole heritage of the Christian tradition. As with children who grow up and leave their parents only to retain as adults the identity they acquired in their family of origin, so it is with the baptist theologians of generation twenty-something who came of age. These theologians exhibit (and sometimes celebrate) the independence and irascibility of the radical side of the Christian family. Yet they also recognize that mainline and establishment members of the household need the wisdom of the baptist way in order to be a faithful church (baptist catholics) and that baptists require the witness of the entire church to live out the conviction that their life together is truly Christian (catholic baptists).

What can account for the disproportionate activity and growth of baptist theologians who were born during this decade? A simple answer is that it was the “G. I. generation” who sowed sacrificial seeds during World War II and reaped the harvest of opportunities for advanced education. This pragmatic explanation, however, begs the deeper question of why they became theologians in the first place, and more importantly, how they became the theologians they did. What happened in the twentieth century that caused, or at least occasioned, the coming of age of baptist theology in generation twenty-something? Five factors were instrumental.

26 The theological practice of drawing from the wisdom of the whole church is the spirit to which I was seeking to give voice in my essay “A Confession for Catholic Baptists,” in Ties That Bind: Life Together in the Baptist Vision, ed. Gary A. Furr and Curtis W. Freeman (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 1994) 83-97. That mainline Protestants are learning from the theological display of baptist convictions is evident in Douglas John Hall, The End of Christendom (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1997); Loren B. Mead, The Once and Future Church (New York: The Alban Institute, 1991); and Christopher Rowland, “A Response: Anglican Reflections” in Reflections on the Water, ed. Paul Fiddes (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 1996) 117-34. Mead, an Episcopal priest, displays the underlying conviction correlative to the practice of believers’ baptism by arguing that mainline Protestants must “rethink what the churches mean by baptism and how they structure their life to bring the young to faithful maturity . . . [which] requires something more than tinkering with the age of baptism and admission to communion,” The Once and Future Church, 51. Rowland, an Anglican priest and theologian, goes even further. He confesses that although he is a member of a church that is committed to infant baptism, he regards believers’ baptism to be the proper practice. No mere theoretical issue, Rowland even refused to have his own children christened so that their eventual baptism could be a profession of faith.
(1) An Ethic of Social Solidarity. The collapse of the farm economy of 1928 and the stock market crash of 1929 led to the Great Depression of the 1930s. Local communities and churches lacked sufficient resources to adequately address the human suffering created by the ever-increasing number of unemployed, homeless, poor, and hungry. In 1932 Franklin D. Roosevelt accepted the nomination as the Democratic candidate for President of the United States with a promise that the federal government would provide "a new deal for the American people," especially those at the bottom of the economic pyramid. It worked. As the rugged individualism and self-sufficiency of pre-New Deal America gave way to a national spirit of corporate responsibility, the theologians of generation twenty-something came of age in an era that realized the inadequacy of the gospel of personal conversion without a corresponding ethic of social solidarity. As Rauschenbusch had witnessed the failure of the evangelical message of individual conversion as a remedy for social evil, for the New Deal generation private Christianity no longer seemed adequate to the way of Jesus or the church. They learned that righteousness demands redemption of the social, political, and economic institutions which resist the direction of the gospel.

(2) A Politics of Moral Ambiguity. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the United States entered the conflict of World War II. Some of generation twenty-something joined the military (Ashcraft and McClendon the US Navy and Yamada the Japanese Navy). Others were conscientious objectors (Kaufman and Yoder). One was interred by the Japanese (Gilkey). All were deeply affected. The war seemed for so many to be a clear case of good versus evil, but the consequences were almost unimaginable: over fifteen million soldiers lost their lives. The nation that claimed the moral and intellectual leadership of Europe produced Auschwitz and Bergen Belsen. The people who pledged themselves to be "one nation under God" approved of the deliberate and indiscriminate deaths of noncombatants at Dresden and Hiroshima. And when Adolf Eichmann, the very incarnation of evil, was brought to trial, he appeared to be a very average person. The war raised troubling questions that demanded theological answers: Who could perpetrate such atrocities? Where was God? What kind of world is this? For the young theologians of generation twenty-something, who entered seminary studies and graduate school after the war, the moral clarity of innocence had been shattered. Gone was the liberal optimism about the future of civilization. Lost was the

28McClendon, "Taking the Side of the World," Covenant Address to the Alliance of Baptists on 28 April 2000 in Austin, TX.
30For a fascinating and horrifying story of how modern technology and medicine could have gone so far wrong, see Robert Jay Lifton, The Nazi Doctors (New York: Basic Books, 1986).
unambiguous identification of national agendas with good and evil. They struggled to make sense of God and God’s way in the wake of a politics of moral ambiguity.

(3) An Era of Denominational Vitality. The postwar period was a time of flourishing for American Christianity. Church membership increased by 26.5 million from 1946 to 1955 and by 21.5 million from 1956 to 1965. Baptist in the United States grew from 16.6 million in 1952 to 27.3 million in 1978. Baptist life in post World War II America was vital but lacked sufficient numbers of educated ministers to lead churches; consequently, it also lacked the theological discipline to voice its convictions and practices well. As baptists became more urban, affluent, and mainstream, the need and demand for trained ministerial leadership became more acute, thus promoting the growth of theological education for Christian ministers which in turn provided teaching opportunities for those who earned advanced degrees. It is no surprise, then, that seven of the fourteen theologians in generation twenty-something received at least one degree from a denominational college or seminary and that ten of them spent time teaching in institutions sponsored by their denomination.

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34National Baptists grew from 7 million members in 1958 to almost 10 million in 1982 (Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists [Nashville: Broadman, 1958], s.v. “National Baptist Convention of America, Inc.” and “National Baptist Convention, USA”) and (Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists [Nashville: Broadman, 1982], s.v. “National Baptist Convention of America, Inc.” and “National Baptist Convention, USA”). These numbers are probably overestimated. Membership statistics are difficult to compute, not only because there are several National Baptist Conventions in which many congregations hold dual alignment, but also because National Baptists do not report membership by church.
35Mennonite groups, though less outgoing than their Baptist cousins, underwent proportionate increases (The Mennonite Encyclopedia, ed. Harold S. Bender, et al., [Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1957], s.v. “Mennonite Brethren,” “Mennonite Central Committee,” “Mennonite Church”).
36Membership in the American Baptist Churches remained relatively constant at 1.5 million during the same time, although the Fundamentalist and Conservative schisms took away congregations and members that would otherwise have been part of growth (H. Leon McBeth, The Baptist Heritage [Nashville: Broadman, 1987] 607).
37A Northern Baptist study on theological education in 1945 concluded that their seminaries were providing only half the number of needed graduates to staff their churches (McBeth, The Baptist Heritage, 595). As late as 1982, another study reported that only 45% of the Southern Baptist pastors held seminary degrees, which was a rise from 36% a decade earlier (Ibid., 667).
38Teaching: Ashcraft (Furman, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary), Kraus (Goshen), McClendon (Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary [GGBTS]), Garrett (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary [SWBTS], The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary [SBTS], Baylor), Lewis (Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary), Yamada (Goshen), Yoder (AMBS), Roberts (Shaw, VA Union, and Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary), Imasogie (Nigerian Baptist
(4) A Mood of Ecumenical Unity. As "the Christian century" began, the first World Missionary Conference assembled in 1910 at Edinburgh, Scotland. A series of conferences followed, culminating with the formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 with the aim of promoting Christian unity. Although mainline denominations in America more or less enthusiastically joined the WCC, Baptist participation was less than enthusiastic. Nevertheless, about 45% of the 35 million Baptists worldwide belong to churches that participate in the WCC. Baptists in America range from the ecumenical mainline ABC to the non-ecumenical SBC. However, theological education after World War II, even in denominational schools, embraced the spirit of ecumenism as curricula included the study of theological works published by denominations and authors other than Baptists. More importantly, theology came to be understood as a discipline which studies the faith and practice of the whole Christian tradition. This ecumenism in theological education is evident in the fact that nine of the theologians in generation twenty-something received advanced or terminal degrees from Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, Duke, Yale, Edinburgh, or Boston College, and six have had ecumenical teaching careers.

(5) A Crisis of Theological Integrity. Generation twenty-something was born at a time of theological crisis between fundamentalists who meant to do battle royal for the faith once delivered to the saints and modernists who wanted to replace stale orthodoxy with progressive Christianity. The fractious conflict divided Northern Baptists several times, and although Southern Baptists managed to stay formally united, the glowing embers of the controversy periodically ignited new fires that were not easily extinguished. Despite the fact that most Mennonites sympathized with fundamentalism, they too underwent divisive schisms as late the 1950s. These theological battles were not only fought on the convention floor. They were also waged in classrooms and boardrooms. Northern Baptist Theological Seminary was founded in 1913 as a corrective to the liberal Divinity School of the University of Chicago, and Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary was established in 1925 as a conservative
alternative to the progressive Crozer Theological Seminary.41

By the time generation twenty-something began theological studies in the mid-1940s, the old orthodox theology of Hovey, Dagg, and Boyce, having proven irrelevant to the modern world, was laid to rest. The new liberal theology of Clarke, Mathews, and Hoekstra, so accommodated to modern "progress," seemed to miss much of the truth of historic evangelicalism. Even the mediating accounts of Strong, Mullins, and Macintosh, which attempted to tinker with orthodoxy and liberalism, were losing their persuasiveness.42 Where could they turn for fresh theological insight?

When James McClendon arrived at Southwestern Seminary, he encountered "a gaunt, awkward-looking" professor of theology named W. T. Conner. A student of Strong and Rauschenbush at Rochester, Foster at Chicago, and Mullins at Southern, Conner taught at Southwestern for almost forty years (1910-49). Known as "the theologian of the southwest," Conner was liberating without being liberal and conserving without being rigidly bound to orthodoxy.43 Theology for Conner was grounded in two convictions: to stay true to his conversion and to stick with the Bible.44 To display these convictions, Conner looked initially to the experiential theology of Mullins, James, and the Personalists, but he gradually shifted his attention to voices in the burgeoning biblical theology movement. Conner employed simple diction and sparse annotation, yet anyone who reads Revelation and God, The Gospel of Redemption, or The Cross in the New Testament cannot but imagine the books of Barth, Brunner, and Aulen spread out before him as he wrote.45

In a time of theological crisis, McClendon, his classmate Leo Garrett, and other Southwesterners learned to navigate the currents of neo-orthodoxy from this plain-spoken Texan. It is no surprise, then, that McClendon’s first book, written for readers like his own student the young Nigerian Osadolor Imasogie, was a brief introduction to contemporary theology. Among the "pacemakers" included were Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr, William Temple, E. J. Carnell, Emil Brunner, Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann, Austin Farrer, and his old teacher W. T. Conner.46 Similar stories might well be told about Morris Ashcraft, who studied theology with Dale Moody at Southern, or of Martin Luther King, Jr., who was guided through the writings of Rauschenbusch, Tillich, and Niebuhr by his Crozer professors, or of E. J. Carnell at Harvard and Boston University, where he engaged the thought of Reinhold Niebuhr and Søren Kierkegaard, or of Norman Kraus and Deotis Roberts in their studies at

44McClendon, Doctrine, 59-60.
Duke and Edinburgh. Some of generation twenty-something went a step further by studying directly under the formative theologians of neo-orthodoxy: Gordon Kaufman with H. Richard Niebuhr at Yale, Langdon Gilkey with Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich at Union, John Howard Yoder with Karl Barth at Basel. There is no question, however, that the theology and theologians of neo-orthodoxy provided generation twenty-something with a discourse which enabled them to learn how to speak of God with integrity.

That baptist theology came of age in generation twenty-something and that the Great Depression, World War II, denominationalism, the ecumenical movement, and neo-orthodoxy broadly determined its shape and texture seems clear enough. These social and religious factors account for the commonalties of generation twenty-something, but what as yet is unclear are the differences, or more specifically, how their practice of theology is different in like ways.
The Types of Baptist Theology

In the posthumously published *Types of Christian Theology*, Hans Frei defines "Christian theology" as "an instance of a general class or generic type and is therefore to be subsumed under general criteria of intelligibility, coherence, and truth that it must share with other academic disciplines." Moreover, he states that "Theology" is "an aspect of Christianity and is therefore partly or wholly defined by its relation to the cultural or semiotic system that constitutes that religion." Frei then proposes five types that describe the various arrangements between Christian theology and the display of the "forms of life" that make it make sense.

Another recent look at types in theology comes from Rowan Williams. Simplifying Schleiermacher's three types of theology (i.e., the poetic, the rhetorical, and the scientific), Williams proposes a threefold division of celebratory theology, which exhibits the fullest range of religious language, communicative theology, which displays the gospel in new idioms and structures of language and culture, and critical theology, which challenges and tests the language of celebration and communication. What follows is a modest typology which seeks to delineate in the writings of generation twenty-something the broad contours of how baptists do theology.

(1) Baptists doing theology. In the first type, theology is a discipline within the history of ideas which, although performed by those who are historically or confessionally baptist, is not necessarily related to the ongoing life of concrete convictional communities. This type of theology done by baptists is part of an intellectual culture that might well be described as Christian philosophy (or religious studies). Its goal is intelligibility, not of baptist convictions and practices (for such a move would be sectarian), but of Christianity as a way of thinking about the world. Examples of type 1 from generation twenty-something include Langdon Gilkey of the University of Chicago as well as Gordon Kaufman and Harvey Cox, both of Harvard. In addition to these academic theologians can be added evangelical apologist E. J. Carnell of Fuller. At first blush this typing seems all wrong. What could academic and evangelical theology possibly have in common? It is not unimportant to note that Frei placed liberal David Tracy and evangelical Carl W. Brown in this same category.

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F. H. Henry in the same type, recognizing them as siblings under the skin, not on the basis of the content of their theology, but because of the affirmation that theology must have a foundation that is articulated in philosophical terms. The same could be said of the baptist theologians in type 1.

Gilkey's first book aimed to translate the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo into modern language and to show that this belief is essential to the practice of science and the modern view of life. His subsequent contributions in critical theology turned first to the problem of speaking meaningfully of God in an age of secularity and later reflected on the importance of theology as a way of addressing the contradictions and dilemmas of a declining secular culture. Cox began his theological pilgrimage by embracing the modern secular vision of a religionless age as a means of renewing Christianity, yet like Gilkey, he came to recognize that modernity, not religion, is coming to an end. Much of his writing has thus focused on the recovery and integration of sacred symbols and stories in postmodern life.

The early theological work of Kaufman took up a theme of his mentor, H. Richard Niebuhr, that "all knowledge is conditioned from the standpoint of the knower." Thus Kaufman argued that theological knowledge must be relativized and historicized. The major project of his later work has been to subject the image/concept/symbol "God" to radical revision so as to make it intelligible. The referent of this symbol, Kaufman contends, is "not a particular existent being within or beyond the world, but rather ... that trajectory of cosmic and historical forces which ... is moving us toward a more truly human and ecologically responsible mode of existence." Whereas Kaufman is confident of what cannot be said of the mystery humanity confronts

51Frei, Types of Christian Theology, 24.
61Kaufman, In Face of Mystery, 347, and Theological Imagination, 50.
(i.e., not the transcendent reality of God known in Word and Spirit), as a "Christian rationalist," Carnell was equally convinced of the certainty all people possess (i.e., the clear knowledge of God and God's law). In *The Kingdom of Love and the Pride of Life*, one of his last books, Carnell summarized his works:

In my own books on apologetics I have consistently tried to build on some useful point of contact between the gospel and culture. In *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* the appeal was to the law of contradiction; in *A Philosophy of the Christian Religion* it was to values; and in *Christian Commitment* it was to the judicial sentiment. In this book I am appealing to the law of love.

To be sure, these four baptists differ in many important respects, but they are in agreement that the critical task of theology is to make Christianity intelligible to the broader culture.

(2) *Doing theology as baptists.* In this type, theology is a general field and an analytical method of study, independent of other methods and fields (e.g., philosophy, psychology, cultural anthropology, etc.). It draws heavily upon research from Scripture studies and the history of doctrine. Type 2 theology is practiced by those who are confessionally baptist, and its aim is to serve the well being of the whole church. Unlike type 1, historic baptist theologians are important conversational partners for this theology, but as in type 1 the social and convictional life of baptists is not regarded as paradigmatic. Consequently, this sort of theology gravitates toward other theological models or schemes (e.g., Reformed, neo-orthodox, evangelical). Examples of this theological type from generation twenty-something include Gordon Lewis of Denver Conservative Seminary and James Leo Garrett of Southwestern Seminary. One might locate examples of baptist theologians of type 2 who gravitate toward neo-orthodoxy or other theological schools; however, both of these generation twenty-something theologians have situated themselves in dialogue with evangelicalism.

Lewis and his Denver colleague Bruce Demarest have co-authored a three-volume work entitled *Integrative Theology*, dedicated to E. J. Carnell, Lewis's teacher at Gordon College. Their commitment to biblical inerrancy and orthodox theology addresses a conservative audience, but they enter into extended conversation with classic and contemporary theologians across the spectrum. Except for the treatment of ecclesiology, which defends a baptist view of the church, the perspective is broadly evangelical. Integrative theology is described as a science which utilizes interrelated criteria of truth (e.g., non-contradiction, evidential, and affirmability). Although the outline follows the

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pattern of dividing the subjects into discrete loci, typical of Protestant theology since Melanchthon's *Loci Communes*, the six step method of presentation is unique:

1. Definitional: Identify the problem.
2. Hypothetical: Survey the history of Christianity for various solutions.
3. Biblical: Discover and formulate the teachings of Scripture.
4. Systematic: Order the data into a coherent doctrine.
5. Apologetic: Defend this position against contradictory viewpoints.
6. Practical: Apply the teaching to Christian life and ministry.\(^65\)

Leo Garrett's *Systematic Theology* is even more traditionally structured around the classical loci, but his treatment of each doctrine is nothing short of encyclopedic. His method is simple: examine the relevant biblical texts, survey the history of doctrine, and evaluate the divergent views.\(^66\) Like Lewis and Demarest, Garrett aims at an evangelical audience, although he engages more Baptist theologians in conversation. In fact, Garrett argues that Baptists should be included among evangelicals understood as a stream of the Reformed tradition, and his theology reflects and advances that conception of Baptists.\(^67\) Yet in both of these important projects it is unclear how theological ideas are correlative to a community of conviction that lives out what in these doctrinal formulations is so carefully thought out.

(3) *Doing baptist theology.* In type 3, theology as a second-order appraisal of Christian language and action endeavors to display the grammar of first-order statements, then it seeks to challenge and test Christian language, not only for clarity and coherence, but more importantly for gospel faithfulness. Thus, in its descriptive and critical tasks, type 3 theology attends to the beliefs and practices of convictional communities in which the baptist way is regarded as paradigmatic. In short, this type of theology is guided by the baptist vision.\(^68\)

Some of generation twenty-something, who engage in baptist theology, take a more denominational perspective (i.e., Morris Ashcraft from a Baptist viewpoint; Norman Kraus and Takashi Yamada with an Anabaptist outlook). Others have a more ecumenical standpoint (i.e., John Yoder, James McClendon, Martin Luther King, Jr., Deotis Roberts, and Osadolor Imasogie).

Ashcraft identifies his standpoint as "Free Church Protestantism," although in the thirty years of experience as a professor of theology at Southern, Midwestern, and Southeastern Seminaries, he became a prominent voice of

\(^{65}\)Ibid., 1:7.


\(^{67}\)Garrett regards Baptists as a subtype of evangelicalism ("denominational evangelicals") by identifying theological ideas the two groups hold in common, in James Leo Garrett, Jr., E. Glenn Hinson, and James E. Tull, *Are Southern Baptists "Evangelicals"*? (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983) 126. Garrett’s colleague and co-author Glenn Hinson, however, rejects the designation of Baptists as evangelicals, in Ibid., 173-83.

\(^{68}\)Freeman, McClendon, and da Silva, *Baptist Roots*, 5-7.
mainstream Southern Baptist theology. Kraus, long-time Goshen professor, Mennonite missionary and pastor, declares that his theology represents "a Disciple's Perspective." The theological writings of Yamada, while global in outlook, assume as normative the Anabaptist ecclesiological practices of witness and discipleship. To characterize the theology of these three as denominational is not to suggest that they are provincial. On the contrary, each one casts a gaze on the horizon of the whole world, but at the same time they are representative of the faith and practice of their respective denominations.

The extensive writings of Yoder and McClendon might be characterized as displaying radical catholicity. The church as God's new creation is at the center of Yoder's theology, often quoting but always presuming that "If one is 'in Christ' . . . the old order has gone and a new world has begun" (2 Cor 5:17). This "new humanity" (Eph 2:14-15) is "pulpit and paradigm." The ecclesial vision that runs throughout Yoder's writings is radically reformed, commending the baptist movement as exemplary of this new peoplehood, but also thoroughly catholic, suggesting to his ecumenical conversation partners that the discipling practices of believers' baptism and "voluntary" membership are a witness of how the whole church might truly become a believers' church.

For McClendon, theology is no set of ideas that can be dislodged from the convictions and practices that sustain them. Doctrinal theology seeks to answer the question "What must the church teach if it is really to be the church?" But inquiring minds want to know, "Which church?" Here McClendon provides his own three-fold typology of the correlation between theological reflection and communal convictions: a Catholic approach in which doctrine consists of revealed truth imparted to the church, a Protestant approach where doctrines are understood to be religious affections set forth in speech, and a baptist approach that regards doctrines as rules which govern the social practice of the faith. To be sure, McClendon's recommended model (the baptist vision) is a type, not an actual community. Yet discerning readers have little difficulty grasping that this type is to be identified both with the stream of

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71 Takashi Yamada, "Reconciliation in the Church," in *Baptist Roots*, ed. Freeman, et al., 362-68.
75 McClendon, *Doctrine*, 23.
churches which arise from the Radical Reformation as well as the same radical catholicism prescribed by Yoder.

In the third and final volume of his *Systematic Theology*, McClendon asks "How is a true and faithful church to take its place in the world?" In large measure, this question lies at the center of the theological vision of King, Roberts, and Imasogie. For King it was dream that one day oppressed and oppressors would be reconciled and sit at the same table—a thought unimaginable in the pre-civil rights South. The dream envisioned the social possibility in America of "the beloved community" that transcended the boundaries of race and creed. The genius of King’s vision was his ability to turn the dream into deeds as he discovered ways of expressing love through nonviolent direct action. Yet it was not enough merely to resist evil. For without forgiveness, there could be no freedom, and resistance alone as a strategy for liberation becomes just another ideology of power. Reconciliation and redemption can be the end only if the means are those of love and justice. From where did this moral vision arise? There is no need to look further than the Baptist congregations of his upbringing. Nurtured in the ongoing practices of preaching, singing, and praying, and sustained by conviction that God ever goes before the faithful, the dream took shape. It may have been refined in the second-order thoughts of Benjamin Mays, Walter Rauschenbusch, and Howard Thurman (baptist theologians all) or sharpened by Reinhold Niebuhr and Mahatma Gandhi, but the dream was grounded on the bedrock of a character shaped by the first-order theology of gospel living.

King’s theology of nonviolence has been systematically explored by Deotis Roberts. In his seminal book, *Liberation and Reconciliation*, Roberts dialectically negotiates between the program of liberation by “whatever means necessary” and the piety of reconciliation without justice. The synthesis—the gospel is liberating-love and reconciling-freedom. His subsequent writings have continued to unpack this position. Roberts has recently mined the heritage of the prophethood of believers in the African-American church in contrast to the Euro-American obsession with the priesthood of believers. Roberts urges the recovery of prophetic religion, which arises out of the cries of social protest that resist and subvert the dominant culture, but he is quietly suspicious of priestly religion, which perhaps assumes a certain comfort level that underwrites the

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social and moral status quo. The work of Osadolor Imasogie gestures in the direction of the pan-African theology toward which Roberts points.

All three types of baptist theology can be displayed in the writings of this generation of Baptists. Perhaps the typology can be useful in looking at the approach of theologians born in other eras as well. In the midst of a history of little written theology, baptist theology came of age in generation twenty-something. McClendon’s voice sounds among many others making significant contributions to Baptist life through their efforts. One can hope that because of their work and example it will flourish in the generations to follow.

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